Eyes on the Future

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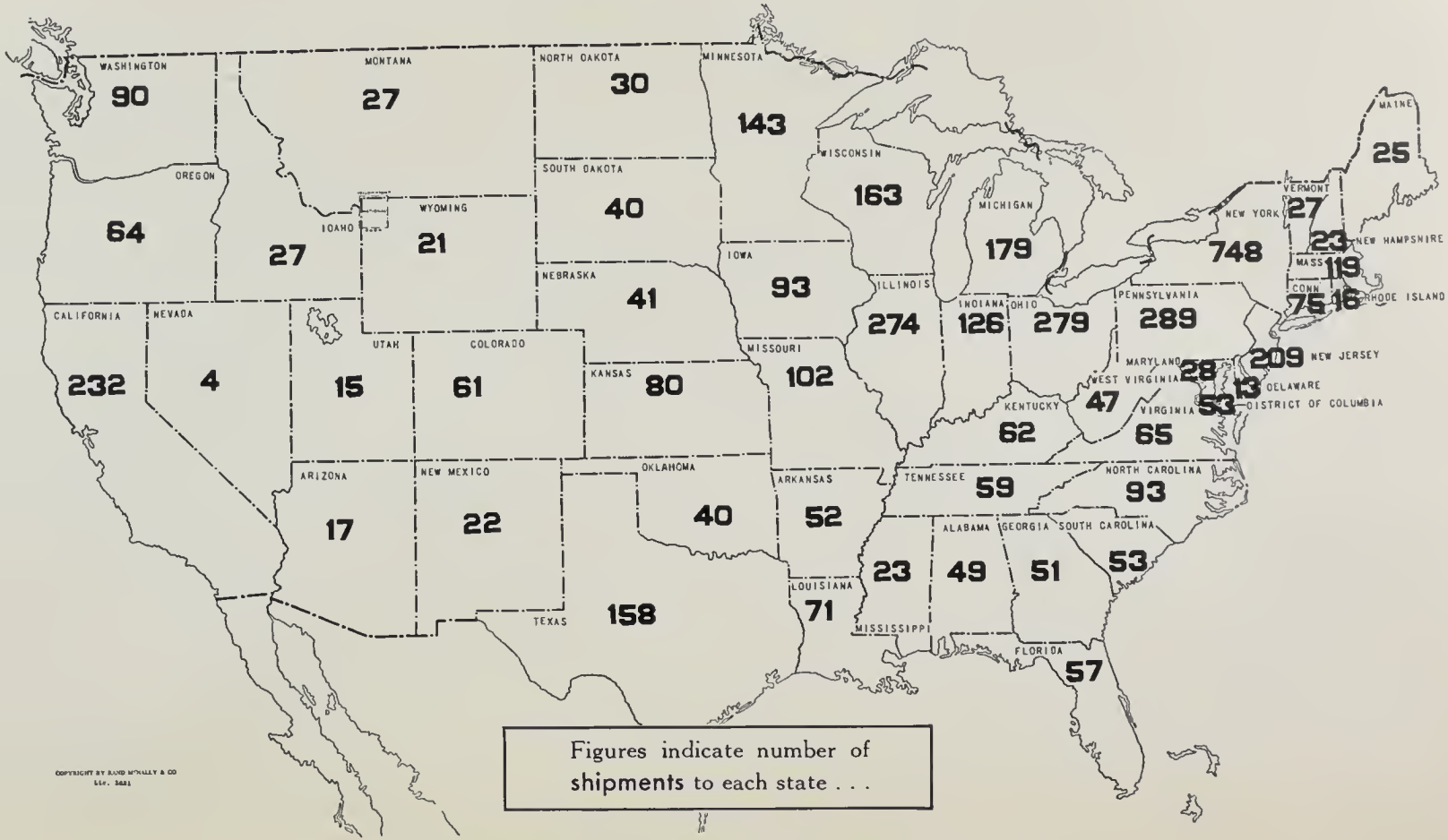
Eyes on the Future

Twenty-third Annual Report
of the
National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc.
50 West 50th Street, New York, N. Y.

1937

Cover illustration through the courtesy of the artist, J. Knowles Hare

Shipments of Publications



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4,666 shipments to 2,274 cities in U. S., territories and possessions
110 shipments to 71 cities in 23 foreign countries

Eyes on the Future

THREE decades have passed since the small group of public-spirited men and women who organized the movement for prevention of blindness turned their eyes prophetically toward the future. The work they started is, in a most literal sense, enabling thousands of men, women, and children to see today and in the future.

The ten pioneers who established a New York State Committee on Prevention of Blindness in 1908 were interested mainly in fighting ophthalmia neonatorum, commonly known as "babies' sore eyes," which was then a major cause of blindness; from this beginning grew the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, with its 18,000 members and donors, whose services now extend from the protection of the eyes of the newborn to the preservation of sight in old age.

Reviewing the work of the Society for 1937, it is appropriate to record the centenary of its founder, Louisa Lee Schuyler. It was Miss Schuyler who was "horror-stricken" and determined to act when she learned that thousands of sightless children would never have been blind if the simple precaution had been taken of dropping a prophylactic solution in their eyes at the time of birth.

The past year marked the loss of a devoted friend, Edward M. Van Cleve. As first managing director of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, he established policies of administration which enabled the Society to carry on a progressively enlarged program and to maintain a sound financial condition.

To Louisa Lee Schuyler and Edward M. Van Cleve this report is dedicated. Their eyes were on the future!

A Review of 1937

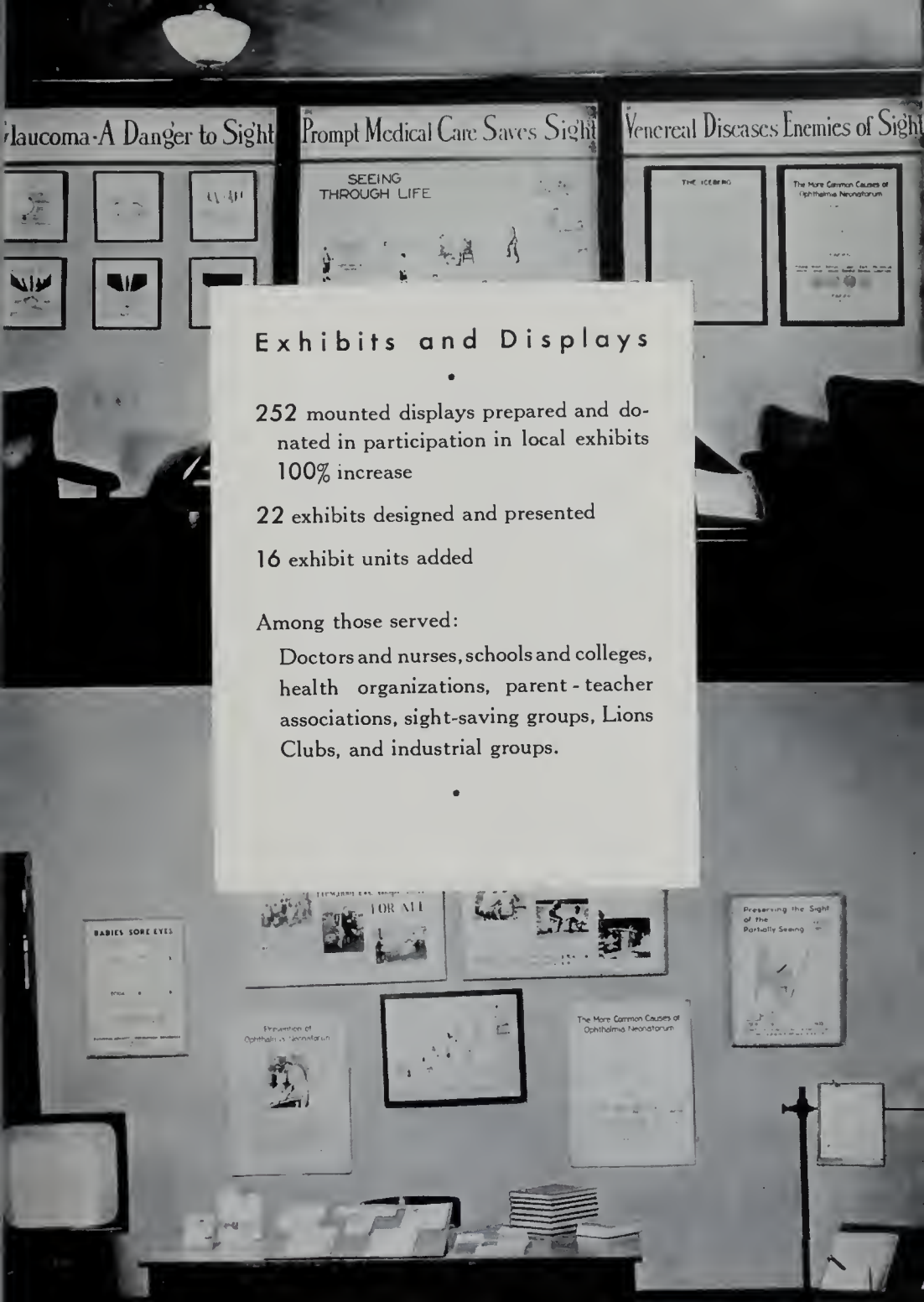
Syphilis Control and Sight Conservation

In 1937, the Society's efforts to prevent loss of sight from disease were given added impetus by the tremendous progress of the campaign to stamp out syphilis, one of the major causes of blindness. Under the leadership of the United States Public Health Service and the American Social Hygiene Association, aided immeasurably by the press and radio, the fight against syphilis has enlisted the active interest of the general public.

The Society has given support in a number of ways to the nation-wide effort to make syphilis the "next great plague to go." Thousands of pamphlets on this subject were distributed free of charge; and large quantities of mounted displays illustrating the relationship between syphilis control and the prevention of blindness were provided for exhibit purposes.

An exhibit on "Syphilis and the Eye" was presented jointly by the Society and the Social Hygiene Committee of the New York Tuberculosis and Health Association, at the Atlantic City Convention of the American Medical Association—an opportunity made possible through Dr. Conrad Berens and Dr. Brittain F. Payne. A paper on "Syphilis in Relation to the Prevention of Blindness," by Dr. Berens and Jacob A. Goldberg, Ph.D., was presented before the Section on Ophthalmology at this Convention; reprints of the paper, published in the *Journal* of the American Medical Association, were ordered by the Society for distribution among selected groups. Another large audience was reached when Dr. Park Lewis discussed "Syphilis of the Eye in Industry" at the Society's joint meeting with the American Public Health Association, in New York City; printed copies of the talk were later made available to industrial hygienists, public health workers, and others.

It is encouraging to report that by the end of the year 23 states had passed laws requiring premarital medical examinations, to reduce the chances of syphilitic infection. A number of states are giving increasing attention also to the need for legislation requiring a blood test for every expectant mother.



Exhibits and Displays

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252 mounted displays prepared and donated in participation in local exhibits
100% increase

22 exhibits designed and presented

16 exhibit units added

Among those served:

Doctors and nurses, schools and colleges, health organizations, parent-teacher associations, sight-saving groups, Lions Clubs, and industrial groups.

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Through such a test, the presence of syphilis can be detected in time to provide treatment that will safeguard the unborn from the ravages of this disease.

As measures of this kind are adopted by the states, the amount of blindness from syphilis may be expected to decrease steadily—just as legislation requiring prophylactic drops in the eyes of infants at birth has eliminated ophthalmia neonatorum as a major cause of blindness among children.

Eye Hygiene in the Schools

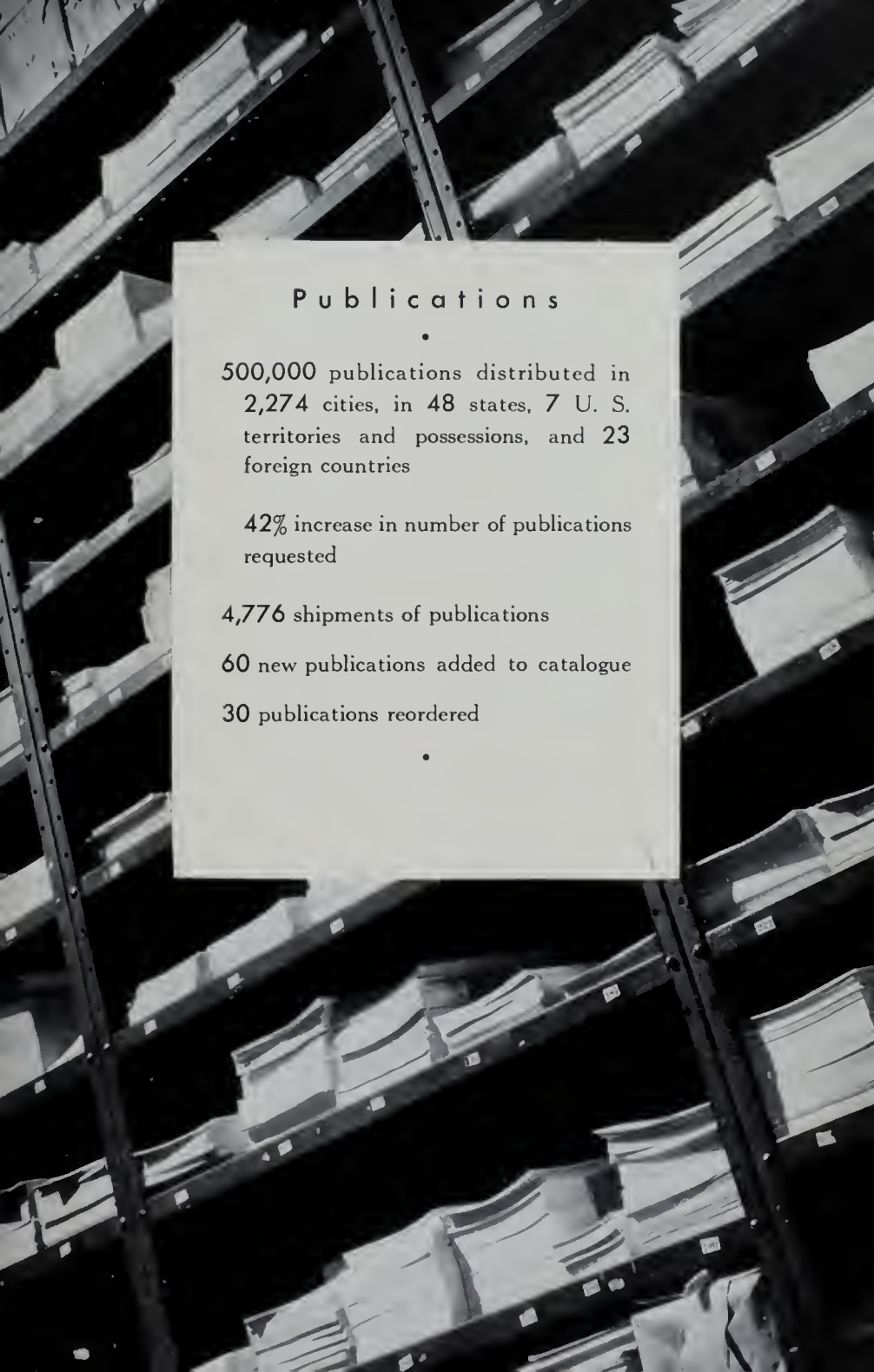
In the course of its varied activities in the field of school eye hygiene, the Society concentrated on: (1) expansion of all phases of sight-saving class work; and (2) extension of the program to incorporate instruction on eye hygiene in the curricula of universities and colleges for the training of teachers.

Sight-Saving Class Work.—A new high was reached in the number of students enrolled in the summer courses for training of sight-saving class teachers; 120 students attended the courses given at the following colleges and universities: State Teachers College, Buffalo, N. Y.; Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, N. Y.; Wayne University, Detroit, Mich.; and Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. As usual, the Society co-operated through the participation of its staff members on the faculties and through the contribution of its facilities and consultation services.

Forty-four new sight-saving classes were established during the year. By the end of 1937, there were 558 classes in the United States, including the District of Columbia and Hawaii.

The Society, through its opportunities for evaluating developments in sight-saving class equipment and methods, continued to serve as a medium for the exchange of information among those directly concerned with the sight-saving class work. Promotion and consultation services to the educational world were continued through field trips, correspondence, and conferences.

Universities and Colleges for the Training of Teachers.—Since the teacher is one of the chief guardians of the school child's eyesight, the Society has formulated an educational program to help her meet this responsibility. First, it was



Publications

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500,000 publications distributed in 2,274 cities, in 48 states, 7 U. S. territories and possessions, and 23 foreign countries

42% increase in number of publications requested

4,776 shipments of publications

60 new publications added to catalogue

30 publications reordered

•

decided to find out how much the student who is preparing to be a teacher, knows about eye hygiene. A sampling of student knowledge made by means of a test, given to 1,200 senior students in 20 of these institutions, indicated the need for adding instruction in eye hygiene to prepare teachers adequately for classroom work. Another inquiry was initiated among such schools to determine what instruction on eye hygiene is already included in their curricula. It is hoped that the findings from these two inquiries will form the basis for recommendations as to what fundamental information on eye hygiene is needed in the curricula for teacher preparation and how it should be integrated into the courses.

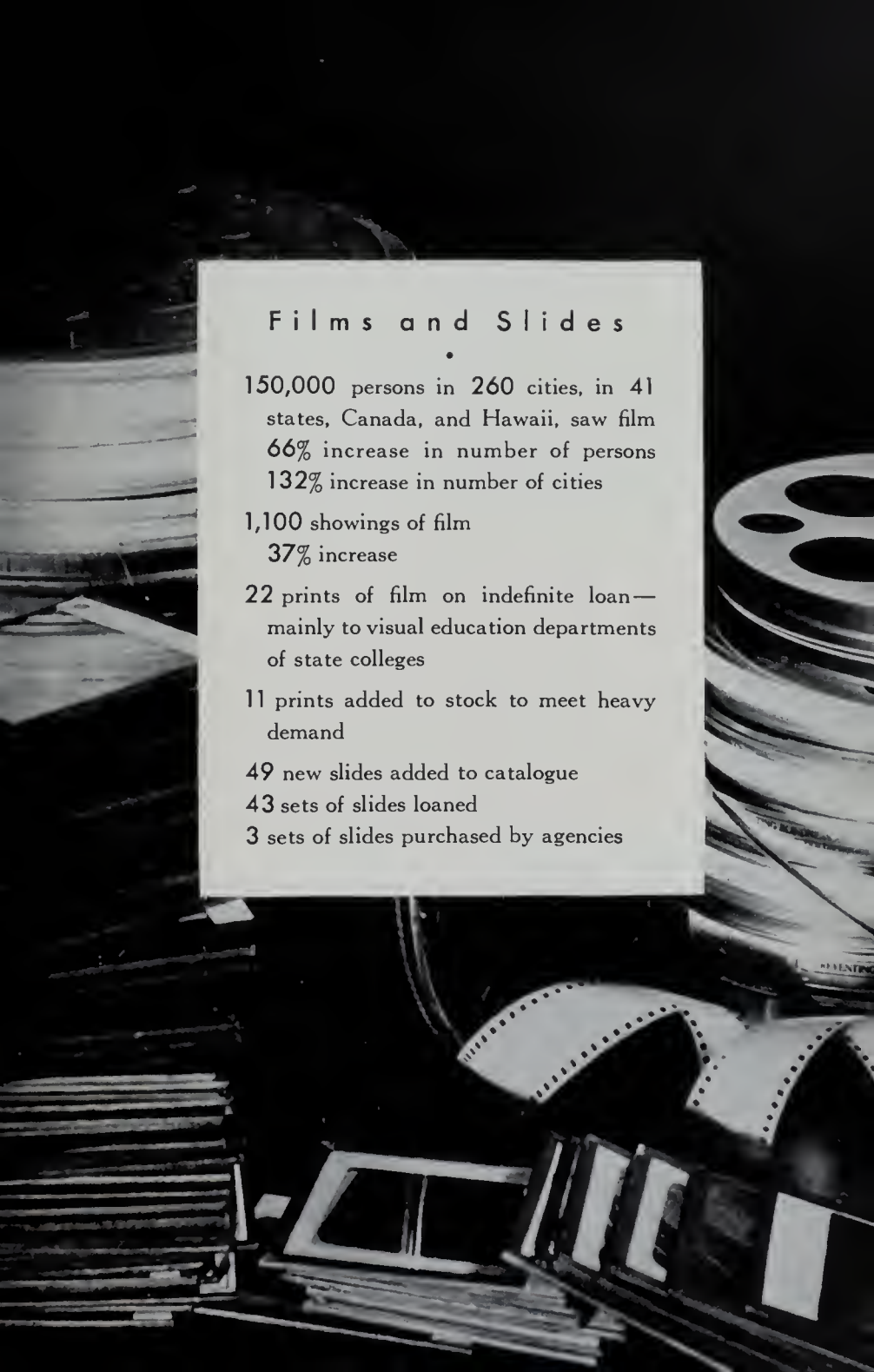
Co-operation with American Student Health Association.—For the first time, the subject of eye health was included in the annual meeting of the American Student Health Association, in Chicago. The Society participated in the session on eye health of college students, and presented an exhibit on recommended study facilities for college students.

An important contribution toward the solution of school eye health problems may be anticipated from the appointment of a special Committee on Eye Health, by the American Student Health Association, for which the Society acts as secretariat. The work of this Committee will be augmented by the collaboration of an advisory committee of three ophthalmologists, appointed by the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology, to consider eye health problems of students.

Lighting of Schoolrooms.—The Society is represented on the Committee on Industrial and School Lighting of the Illuminating Engineering Society, which has continued working on a revision of the standards of lighting for schoolrooms. It is expected that this revised edition, which was approved by the American Standards Association, will be available in printed form early in 1938.

Safety for Eyes

Definite benefits have resulted from the annual campaign, in which the Society participates, for a "safe and sane" celebration of the Fourth of July. Statistical information and



Films and Slides

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150,000 persons in 260 cities, in 41 states, Canada, and Hawaii, saw film
66% increase in number of persons
132% increase in number of cities

1,100 showings of film
37% increase

22 prints of film on indefinite loan—mainly to visual education departments of state colleges

11 prints added to stock to meet heavy demand

49 new slides added to catalogue
43 sets of slides loaned
3 sets of slides purchased by agencies

other material furnished by the Society at the request of public officials have been used effectively in a number of states in securing the enactment of legislation. An outstanding example was the State of New Jersey, which, through legislative action, reduced the number of Fourth of July fireworks accidents from 927 in 1936 to 72 in 1937. Other sources of accidents to the eyes of children are air-rifles, air guns and BB guns. New York City and Baltimore during the past year enacted ordinances prohibiting the sale and use of such weapons or toys, and it is expected that these laws will help to reduce accidents to the eyes.

An increased number of inquiries received by the Society from state labor commissioners and officials of labor bureaus, as well as from foreign and international organizations, indicates a growing interest on the part of these officials in the subject of eye safety in industry.

Classifying the Causes of Blindness

More exact data on the causes of blindness are gradually emerging from the work of the Committee on Statistics of the Blind, which is sponsored jointly by the Society and the American Foundation for the Blind. The Committee is seeking to establish uniform classifications acceptable to the medical profession for use by official and voluntary agencies. A report containing the Committee's revised classifications was submitted in 1937 to the Section on Ophthalmology of the American Medical Association and to the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology, which are scheduled to act on the matter during 1938. Record forms developed by the Committee are already in use in 42 schools and day classes for the blind.

Other Activities of the Society

Inter-Organization Committee on Sight Conservation.—An Inter-Organization Committee on Sight Conservation, for which the Society acts as secretariat, was formed to consider the possibilities of making state-wide prevention of blindness a part of the program of state health departments. The following organizations have representation on this Committee:

Publicity

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Approximately 2,000 newspaper and magazine editorials, news stories, and feature articles, in 585 cities in 48 states and the District of Columbia

WATCH EYES

DRIVE TO SAFEGUARD EYESIGHT GROWING

National Society for Prevention of Blindness Reports

Blindness Prevention Is Object

Firecrackers, Gunpowder And Blinded Children.

'Conservation of Vision Make Progr

National Society For vention Of Blin Gives Encouraging port On Year's Wo

BLINDNESS CAN BE PREVENTED

SCHOOLS ARE WARNED TO WATCH STUDEN

With 29,000,000 grade and school children taking up their ies again, Lewis H. Carris, ma director of the Society for t

Guarding Children's Eyes

At this time of the year the National Soci for the Prevention of Blindness issu annual warning to parents against the children's eyesight from careless use works on Independence day. It urge community celebrations, with expert dling the fireworks, be substituted for t

WATCH OF STUDE EXPERT U

Would Conserve By Education and Examination

PREVENTING BLINDNES

American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology, American Public Health Association, American Public Welfare Association, Children's Bureau, National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Office of Education, Social Security Board, State and Provincial Health Authorities of North America, and United States Public Health Service.

Annual Conference.—Through the courtesy of the American Public Health Association, the Society held its annual conference in conjunction with the annual convention of that organization, in New York City, October 6, 7, and 8, 1937. Because of the large and diversified membership of the American Public Health Association, the Society reached a more extensive audience than usual. Special sessions in which the Society participated were those on The Crippled Child, Industrial Hygiene, and Child Hygiene.

The meeting of the American Public Health Association afforded a unique opportunity of bringing before the executive state, county, and city health officers attending it, the objectives of the Inter-Organization Committee on Sight Conservation. Accordingly, a dinner meeting, sponsored by the Society, was held, at which five-minute talks on the "Possibilities for Further State-wide Development of Sight Conservation Through Co-operation of Interested Agencies," were presented by the representatives on the Inter-Organization Committee. Of the 173 persons attending the dinner, 21 were executives of state and provincial health departments, 29 were county health officers, and 42 were city health officers—representing 38 states and 100 local communities. Others present included Sir Arthur Newsholme, of England, and Dr. Ricardo F. Fernandez, of Porto Rico, as well as a number of the Society's officers, directors, and Advisory Committee members.

The official Annual Meeting of the Society was held during the conference, on the afternoon of October 6. Dr. William F. Snow was principal speaker. A resolution, acknowledging the courtesy and co-operation of the American Public Health Association in making possible the joint programs, was adopted by the members.

Institute on Eye Health.—Because of the lack of facilities for training personnel to undertake local prevention of blindness work, the Society conducted an intensive four-weeks'

course on eye health which was directed by an ophthalmologist. Participating in teaching at this Institute were specialists from various fields relating to sight conservation, in addition to the staff of the Society.

Co-operation with Nurses.—The Society maintained its close relationship with organized nursing groups and nurses individually. Hundreds of requests from nursing groups for published material, exhibits and films, and field service, were filled throughout the year.

International Association for Prevention of Blindness.—The annual meeting of the International Association for Prevention of Blindness took place in Cairo, Egypt, in December, during the International Congress of Ophthalmology. The Society was represented by Dr. Park Lewis, who gave an address on "The Responsibility of the Ophthalmologist in the Conservation of Sight and the Prevention of Blindness," and by Mr. Lewis H. Carris, managing director, who presented a paper on "The Rôle of the Social Worker in a Prevention of Blindness Program," prepared jointly with Mrs. Eleanor Brown Merrill, associate director. The Society co-operated further with the International Association by sponsoring the English edition of the report, "The Number of the Blind and the Protection of the Eyes in Different Countries," in which the Society's statistical report on prevention of blindness legislation in the United States is included.

Co-operation in New York World's Fair.—A representative of the Society was named to the General Advisory Committee on Medicine and Public Health, for the World's Fair, to be held in New York City in 1939; and, in addition, Dr. John M. Wheeler, of the Society's Board of Directors, was made chairman of a sub-committee on conservation of sight.

Leslie Dana Award for 1937.—The Society shared in the honor accorded by the award of the Leslie Dana Gold Medal to Mrs. Winifred Hathaway, associate director, for her "inspired service in behalf of sight-saving classes for visually handicapped children."

In Memoriam, 1937

Mr. Elihu Root, honorary president.

Mr. Edward M. Van Cleve, member of the Board of Directors.

Summary of Finances

EXPENSES DURING 1937			
Administration		$37,251.40	
Education and Public Information		43,948.95	
Field Service		15,050.96	
Editorial Research		8,335.19	
Publications		14,907.88	
Extension (Fund Raising)		18,205.36	
Co-operative Projects		14,047.28	
Retirement Plan—premiums and other		2,588.68	
Total Expenses, 1937			$154,335.70
INCOME DURING 1937			
Donations			
New	$13,139.88		
Renewal	67,867.33	$81,007.21	
Memberships			
New	$ 1,015.00		
Renewal	14,309.75	15,324.75	
Interest on Endowment and Reserve Funds		11,466.21	
Share of income distributed by Wendel Foundation		7,500.00	
Sale of publications, subscriptions to *Sight-Saving Review*, etc.		4,955.84	
Total Income, 1937			120,254.01
Leaving an excess of expenses over income during 1937 of			$ 34,081.69
Total resources at December 31, 1936, including mortgages, securities, and real estate, at book value			$346,498.59*
Withdrawn from Reserve Fund to meet excess of expenses over income during 1937			34,081.69
Total			$312,416.90
Net additions to Endowment, Reserve, and Special Projects Funds during 1937, from legacies, life memberships, and special gifts			77,177.62
Total resources at December 31, 1937, including mortgages, securities, and real estate, at book value			$389,594.52*

* This does not include the Society's 1/40th share in the unliquidated properties of the Wendel Foundation and in estates in the course of administration.

The foregoing statement is based on the report of Frederick Fischer, Jr., C.P.A., by whom the accounts of the Society were audited. A copy of the report will be sent upon request.

The Managing Director is required by the Board of Directors to submit a detailed statement of proposed expenditures and to account for all sums spent within the budget limitations. Vouchers are on file for every expenditure.

The year 1937 was the fifth consecutive year in which members and donors contributed more than they did the preceding year.

Opportunities for preventing blindness, and interest in this field of social welfare, are expanding rapidly, and the Board of Directors, as in the past, approved the use of part of the reserve funds for current purposes. Through receipt of special gifts and legacies, the resources of the Society, at book value, were increased, nevertheless, by $43,095.95.

The Directors gratefully acknowledge the generosity and confidence which have placed these funds in their care for the Society's work. It is their constant purpose to maintain a sound financial condition, and they believe that satisfaction should be found in the situation as disclosed by this report.

Form of Bequest

I give and bequeath to the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc., a corporation created under the laws of the State of New York, the sum of..... Dollars for its corporate purposes.

National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc.

50 West 50th Street, New York, N. Y.

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